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ABSTRACT

The education of today's Iowa students does not provide them with the technical skills that will be demanded by nearly every work place. Neither does it provide them with sufficient ability to analyze complex information to make increasingly difficult social, political, or life decisions. This plan encourages and guides the reconstruction of Iowa's system of education. The concepts in this plan were developed by a Strategic Planning Council composed of 45 Iowans (educators, parents, business people, board members, and trustees). Four closely related goals provide the framework of this plan: (1) to increase the level of learning and achievement of all students to their maximum potential; (2) to increase the productivity and capacity of human resources in the state's education system; (3) to transform the education system at the building, district, area, and state levels to support the teaching and learning process; and (4) to provide leadership to improve Iowa education through systematic planning and quality assurance. The objectives in each section are grouped as they apply to the three major components of the education system governed by the state board: elementary/secondary schools; community colleges; and vocational rehabilitation. (LAP)

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Education is Iowa's Future

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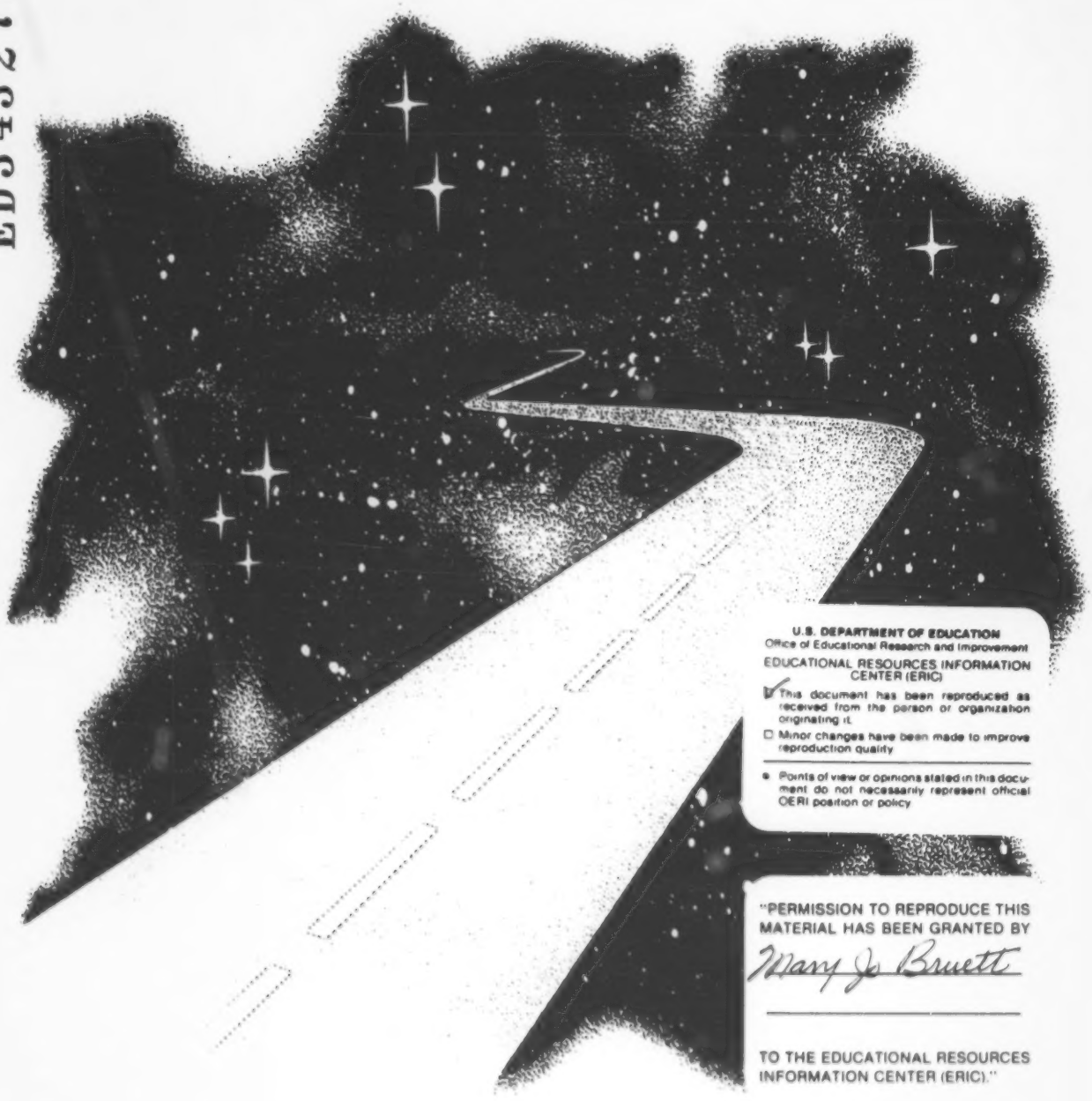

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The State Plan for Educational Excellence in the 21st Century

Iowa Department of Education, January 1992

EA 023 838

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Education is Iowa's Future

The State Plan for Educational Excellence in the 21st Century

Iowa Department of Education
January 1992

State of Iowa
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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To the Citizens of Iowa

This strategic plan for education in Iowa will serve as the foundation for the State Board of Education in developing policy, advocating change and monitoring progress over the next five years.

The plan was developed with broad involvement from Iowans who represented teachers, administrators, school board members, parents, business and industry, government and other groups. The State Board will continue its commitment to seeking the advice and response of Iowans as the plan is updated each year to ensure the continued quality of programs and service to Iowa learners.

"Education is Iowa's Future" is hereby submitted to the Governor, the members of the Iowa General Assembly and the citizens of Iowa for their consideration and support for its fulfillment.

The State Board of Education
Ron McGauvran, President, Clinton
Betty L. Dexter, Vice President, Davenport
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Marcia Dudden, Reinbeck
Thomas M. Glenn, Des Moines
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Introduction

Since today's high school students were born, their future work places, their communities and even their families have changed dramatically. The make up of Iowa's population, patterns of family living, the skills demanded in the work place, the dramatic shifts in world politics, the power of technology to change how we work and live, and the sheer volume of knowledge available—all of these changes will make the Iowa of the 21st century substantially different than the Iowa of the 1950s and even the 1990s.

Unfortunately, Iowa elementary schools, high schools and community colleges have changed very little. It is important to understand that Iowa educators are doing an outstanding job in accomplishing what they have been asked to do. Schools are filled with intelligent professionals committed to nurturing young minds. All the indicators show that Iowa students achieve among the best in the nation. But for all the successes of our education system, it is still preparing children and young people for their grandparents' world.

The education received by today's students does not provide them with the technical skills that will be demanded by nearly every work place. Neither does it provide them with sufficient ability to analyze complex information to make increasingly difficult social, political or life decisions. It lets too many students slip through without the basic skills they need to succeed in further education or a job because their advancement in school was based on the amount of time they spent in class, not what they actually learned.

The results—both for students personally and for the state as a whole—are staggering. This mismatch between the changing world and an unchanged education system threatens the future of Iowa's people and its economy.

It's time to make fundamental changes in Iowa's education system to ensure the future of Iowa's quality of education and of life. The changes that need to be made are no secret. Pioneering schools in Iowa and across the country are making bold innovations to ensure that all students learn at extremely higher levels, and they are proving that these methods work. In fact, all the elements needed for schools of the 21st century exist today right here in Iowa. But they exist in spite of, not because of, the education system. And these "seeds of excellence" will not thrive and grow unless the education system as a whole changes to support them.

There are many signs that this education system is ready for change. The Iowa Business and Education Roundtable, a think tank of business and education leaders, sounded the call for dramatic changes in schools in its report, "World-Class Schools: The Iowa Initiative." Iowa teachers expressed their desire for the time and tools they need to help all students succeed through the Iowa State Education Association report, "Time for a Change." The Iowa Legislature has taken on the challenge of education reform through its interim committee on K-12 school

transformation. The Iowa Association of School Boards has responded to dramatically increasing demands on school board members by developing a high-quality training program to build leadership skills and knowledge of education issues. Recently, the New Iowa Schools Development Corporation was formed as a highly unusual collaborative of state education organizations and others committed to working together to help the "seeds of excellence" schools flourish and multiply. In short, all the key players from the school house to the state house are at the table, talking about change and ready for action.

"The key issues being addressed nationally in education are addressed in this plan. Communities ought to expect their schools to be addressing these issues."

Susan Fisher, president, Mason City Board of Education

This plan encourages and guides the reconception of Iowa's system of education. The concepts in this plan were developed by a Strategic Planning Council composed of 45 Iowans. Many of them were educators. Some were parents, business people, board members and trustees. They did not "start from scratch." Instead, the foundation of their work was laid by a variety of recent reports from other Iowa groups. They also listened to what Iowans said about educational issues and about their recommendations. Through two rounds of regional meetings in 1991, thousands of comments were recorded. They read every one.

When the State Board of Education entrusted this council of thoughtful and enthusiastic Iowans with the task of developing a long-range plan, they met that challenge with broad support for their recommendations. That's how it works best in Iowa: providing strong leadership, but basing change on extensive involvement and mutual trust among a broad range of education stakeholders.

The recommendations contained in this plan guide a process of complex and enormous change. They place the traditional change issues of school consolidation, class sizes and educator salaries in the context of the changes that need to be made to meet higher standards of achievement for all learners. The new issues are determining what an educated Iowan must be in the next generation, what sort of teaching and learning processes will best help that person develop and how our education system must be designed to support this kind of teaching and learning. This plan sets the stage for "top-down support for bottom-up reform."

Building Excellence for All

This plan is built around four closely related goals. The first focuses on the heart of education, the students and learners of all ages whose "work" is school. The second moves outward to the human resources of education–the teachers, administrators, trustees and board members that guide learning. The third focuses on the education infrastructure–the schools, area education agencies, community colleges, educator preparation programs and others. The fourth centers on leadership and accountability for the education system.

The objectives in each section are grouped as they apply to the three major components of the education system governed by the State Board: elementary/secondary schools, community colleges and vocational rehabilitation.

Reaching for New Heights in Student Achievement

Goal: To increase the level of learning and achievement of all students to their maximum potential.

It is time to reach for new heights in student achievement with the 21st century in mind and for Iowans to agree on the results they expect from students and their educational institutions. The first step is to form that agreement at the state level and in every community so that students, educators and parents know what is expected of them and so that each community can support them in reaching those goals.

High expectations must be inherent in this agreement. First, these "outcomes" of education should be developed around the philosophy that all students can learn and that all are capable of achieving at much higher levels. In addition, they should be developed with the recognition that students should be learning much more than shopkeeper math or a series of facts. Iowa's 21st century student outcomes should focus on the need for students to learn to think, to solve complex problems, to analyze information, to communicate and to appreciate diversity. This new vision of what we expect as the results of education will guide everything else in the system, from the way learning is measured to the way the school year is structured.

This plan calls for developing ways to assess student achievement that are credible to educators, motivating to students and accountable to the public. It gives young children a boost in learning by calling for high-quality preschool to be available in every school district, and opens the doors of community colleges even wider to ensure that learners of all ages have a place to grow in Iowa. It makes parents and community members full partners in educating students.

"Iowa's future workforce must be prepared to face new challenges and to compete in a global environment. To succeed, the focus of Iowa schools must be on student outcomes."

Governor Terry Branstad

Major Objectives

Elementary/Secondary:

1.1 Student Outcomes—Iowans will agree on what students are to learn in Iowa schools. This agreement will be forged at the local and state levels.

- **A general set of student outcomes to be met by all Iowa students will be determined at the state level by a broad cross-section of education stakeholders. The state outcomes will be related to, but not limited to, the six national education goals.**
- **More specific outcomes will be established in each school district in relation to the state and national goals.**

Expectations for what students need to know and be able to do are not clear. Schools are now asked to meet different expectations from parents, business and community groups. So many changes are occurring in society that it is time to establish new and higher standards of learning for students. Without this agreement, Iowa students will not be prepared to face a world very different than that of their parents and grandparents.

"The development of outcomes and assessments will set the agenda in Iowa education. It will bring together all different facets of the community to answer the question of what they want students to know and be able to do. That type of self-examination has never been attempted before in Iowa education."

John Mesicek, language arts teacher, Ankeny High School, and vice president, Iowa State Education Association

Agreement on the outcomes expected of all students will focus the attention of the Department of Education, area education agencies, teacher preparation institutions and the rest of the support structure for local schools toward helping schools and students achieve the outcomes. As examples, two of the seven outcomes proposed by the Iowa Business and Education Roundtable include:

- Each student will be able to read, write, speak and listen and to use math and foreign language skills in ways similar to what he or she will encounter in life.
- Each student will make a successful transition to the work place or postsecondary education after high school graduation.

But it is very important that each community express its desires for the educational level of its young people in the form of more specific outcomes and competencies. For example, if a state outcome sets the goal that all students are to be bilingual by the time they graduate from high school, a local outcome might be that students be bilingual before they begin high school. These outcomes and competencies will be established locally with considerable autonomy in how students are helped to meet those ends. The state can allow schools more flexibility in the processes of education as schools become more accountable for the results achieved by students.

Strategy: The State Board of Education will begin immediately to develop statewide student outcomes. The recommendations of the Iowa Business and Education Roundtable report, "World-Class Schools: The Iowa Initiative," are a useful starting point. As this work is completed, school districts should define their own outcomes and competencies. State outcomes will be developed by December 1992, while local outcomes and competencies should be completed during 1993.

1.2 Student Assessment—How well students learn will be measured in a variety of ways that are motivating to students and useful to teachers. Student progress will be continuously assessed and reported.

Teachers know that paper-and-pencil tests tell them only part of what they need to know about how well students are learning. Teachers are developing many methods to assess student learning, such as student portfolios, writing samples and others. After what students must know and be able to do is clearly defined, the best tools available must be used to determine whether students are achieving those results.

Strategy: To expand the authenticity and quality of assessment tools used in Iowa, it will be necessary to identify and disseminate effective assessment strategies based on research; develop new strategies and work with pilot projects in implementing effective strategies; and provide professional development opportunities in effective assessment. The Department of Education will provide leadership in accomplishing these objectives.

The Department will advocate the establishment of a center for the assessment of school effectiveness to foster a broader and more effective use of assessment strategies at the individual, classroom, school and district levels. The center could be a joint project of one or more area education agencies and school districts with leadership from the Department of Education, higher education and assessment experts.

1.3 Early Childhood Education—Every child in Iowa will be able to take part in a developmentally appropriate early childhood education program.

The importance of the early years to a child's future success in learning is immeasurable. They are an important foundation for a love of learning that lasts a lifetime. Research has proven that a high-quality prekindergarten program for disadvantaged students reduces the chances of later criminal arrest, placement in special education or need for public assistance, and increases employment rates and school performance. One of the national education goals calls for every child to start school ready to learn by the year 2000. Although the numbers are growing rapidly, still only a handful of Iowa youngsters today have the opportunity to take part in public preschool programs to help ensure their readiness to learn.

Strategy: The State Board and Department of Education will continue to advocate creation of a comprehensive early childhood education system in Iowa, as outlined in their 1991 plan," Iowa Vision for Early Childhood." The system should involve the participation of parents, various sectors of the community, school districts and other agencies and allow each school district to adopt the program which is best suited to the needs of its community.

1.4 Parent and Community Involvement—Parents and community members will assume their full responsibility as partners in educating Iowa's children.

Research shows that the single most important factor in a child's success in school and life is not innate intelligence, income or family structure; it is the involvement of parents in his or her education. Business, industry, labor and the community at large are benefactors of student achievement and have much to offer to enhance and support learning. Working examples of parent and community involvement in education abound: volunteer programs, parent councils, school-business partnerships and business policies that support parents' and students' needs.

Strategy: Every school district in Iowa will develop a comprehensive plan for helping parents to becoming actively involved in their children's education throughout their school years. School districts will also develop plans to involve community members in meaningful ways to support learning.

1.5 Special Education—Innovative and flexible ways of providing special education services to students will be supported and expanded.

In 1989-90, school districts in four of Iowa's 15 area education agencies began to study and use innovative intervention options for special education students. The goal was to coordinate all available resources so that students would receive better services. This effort, called the "renewed service delivery system," has now been expanded to 14 AEAs and is yielding very positive results. Continued support is needed if the full potential is to be realized.

Strategy: The Department of Education, together with AEAs and local districts, will continue to plan, implement and evaluate renewed service delivery system plans in each area of the state. Local experiences and results will be shared across the state and policies at the state level will be revised to support the most effective practices.

"Using a broader variety of assessments will allow for more individualized instruction and help us meet the needs of all learners."

Jack Schreurs, president, Iowa Association of Nonpublic School Administrators

"There's an increasing recognition that in a technological society, learning isn't something that happens only once. People in all phases of life need an opportunity to have training and retraining to maintain and improve their skills."

Nancy Kothenbeutel, executive director, community education, Eastern Iowa Community College District

Community Colleges:

1.6 Student Outcomes—Each community college will clearly define the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn before they leave a program. Student achievement will be continuously assessed and reported.

Iowans deserve to know how well community college students are achieving and the effectiveness of institutions in delivering programs and services. In addition, state and regional accreditation provisions require institutions to assess and document student outcomes.

It is important that what students are expected to learn be directly related to the skills they'll need in the work place, future education or other experiences. Local advisory committees of business, industry and labor representatives can be used to link the outcomes to work place needs. Work in this direction is already being completed through Senate File 449, an Iowa law that requires competency-based education for vocational-technical areas.

Strategy: Each community college will involve faculty, staff, students and advisory committees in establishing standards for student outcomes and implementing a system for assessing and documenting student performance. Each college will develop competencies for the vocational-technical programs covered under Senate File 449.

1.7 Student Retention—Community colleges will ensure that students have the opportunity to meet their educational goals.

Community colleges accept students of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, resulting in a tremendous variety in students' needs and abilities. It is imperative that resources and services are available to allow all students to succeed in community college education and training programs.

Strategy: Community colleges will develop comprehensive retention plans that monitor progress and completion rates for students and provide support services for all students in need. They will investigate barriers to success and develop and implement strategies to improve success and retention.

Vocational Rehabilitation:

1.8 Access and Completion—Iowans with severe handicaps will have the services they need to help them become employed or independent, based on their own needs, abilities and preferences.

The need and demand for public vocational rehabilitation services continues to exceed the state's ability to serve. Currently, the state Division of Vocational Rehabilitation serves an average of 15,000 people with disabilities every month. During fiscal year 1990, the agency closed the files of 2,994 Iowans as successfully rehabilitated. But almost 35 percent of eligible Iowans with disabilities do not successfully complete their vocational rehabilitation program.

Strategy: The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services will study the number of Iowans who could benefit from its services, along with the types of their disabilities. The information will be given to the Iowa Legislature along with a proposal for additional funding to meet the demand. The state will provide funds to match all available federal funds based on the needs of clients.

Empowering Our Human Resources

Goal: To increase the productivity and capacity of human resources in the state's education system.

Increasing the expectations for what students can learn must go hand in hand with increasing attention to those who work with students. Iowa educators cannot be expected to help all students reach far higher expectations for learning within the limits of the current structure. Ways exist to teach all students at much higher levels, but teachers need the time and professional support to learn them.

This plan calls for seeking and keeping Iowa's best and brightest to serve as teachers and administrators, then supporting them in their roles. It is designed to ensure that educators receive training in the skills they need to help students reach their highest potential.

Major Objectives

Elementary/Secondary:

2.1 Iowa's Educational Work Force—Iowa will implement effective strategies to identify, recruit and select a culturally diverse group of qualified candidates to become teachers and administrators.

Iowa's educational future will be challenging. While improvements can be made in efforts to prepare and develop educators, it only makes sense to aggressively seek the candidates with the highest potential. Currently, little recruitment exists beyond advertisements and only very limited efforts are made to identify and encourage leadership potential within the existing work force. Hiring processes not only suffer from inadequate recruiting, but often lack the sophistication to ensure the selection of the best people available.

In addition, Iowa's educational work force lacks diversity. According to information from the Iowa Leadership in Educational Administration (I-LEAD) project, in 1989, Iowa ranked 44th nationally in the percentage of superintendents who were women or people of color. Iowa ranked 40th in the percentage of high school principals who were women or people of color and last in the percentage elementary school principals.

Strategy: The Department of Education will provide leadership in identifying the most effective identification and recruitment strategies. Training in the use of such strategies will be made available through area education agencies, higher education, professional organizations and local school districts. Districts will work together to implement the strategies.

"If we are talking about changing schools significantly, then we will need to change teacher education significantly, too. Teacher preparation must adapt to the demographics of the new age for which we are educating students. Teachers will need to be information managers, facilitators rather than deliverers of instruction, and experts in the use of technology."

Ann Thompson, chair, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, Iowa State University

2.2 Training and Professional Development—Iowa educators will receive intensive training and support to help turn Iowa's education system into the best in the world. The preparation, licensure and professional development of educators will be based on the skills and knowledge needed of educators in the 21st century.

Leading every Iowa student to much higher levels of learning will require new and different skills on the part of educators. Today's teachers are working very hard within the limits of the teaching strategies now in place. Major changes must be made in teacher education programs to ensure that teachers in training learn to teach students with different learning styles, to individualize education for every student, to fully utilize instructional technology, to participate in shared decision making and to involve parents and others in the classroom. Iowa's current educators need the opportunity to develop these skills as well.

New leadership skills are being demanded of school administrators. They must be able to engage the entire community in the vision of the schools and the future of children and families. They must be able to develop sustained support for the attainment of educational goals and work to ensure that expectations are accompanied by the resources needed to achieve them. But administrator preparation programs today do not usually clearly define outcomes and standards of demonstrated performance. Professional development programs are often of varied quality and fragmented in approaching the skills.

Very simply - transformation cannot occur without dramatic improvements in professional preparation and development.

Strategy: The State Board of Education will define state outcomes for preparation programs with assistance from the Board of Educational Examiners, practitioners and preparation program representatives. The process for approving preparation programs will be based on these outcomes. The Department of Education will work with the Board of Educational Examiners to see that the licensure process, which serves as the final decision point for entry into the profession, ensures that critical knowledge and skills can be applied successfully.

The key to improving professional preparation and development is in developing a shared vision and coordinating strategies among those who share leadership responsibility. This includes higher education, the Board of Educational Examiners and the State Board of Education along with area education agencies, educational organizations and local educators.

2.3 Compensating Educators—Iowa educators will receive salaries that reflect their changing responsibilities and increased skills.

About 25 percent of Iowa teachers are expected to retire by 2000, and nearly 60 percent of current school administrators will be leaving the profession during the next 10 years, according to research by Iowa education organizations. Defining new roles with competitive salary and benefits will be vital in attracting new educators to serve in Iowa schools. Yet today, Iowa ranks 38th in the nation in average teacher salary and well below the national averages in administrator salaries.

Strategy: The Iowa Legislature should provide educator compensation with an initial target of at least reaching the national averages.

2.4 Building Public Understanding—The dramatic changes and challenges facing education will be communicated to the public.

Every Iowan needs to understand the dramatic changes occurring in Iowa education and the reasons behind them. Iowans should be made aware of the assets of the state's education system and the tremendous challenges ahead in preparing students for life in the 21st century. The values of lifelong learning and of teaching as a profession should also be stressed.

Strategy: The Department of Education will take the lead in developing an on-going media program to emphasize the value of education and the needs of students. This will require cooperation among the Department of Education, education associations and media professionals in exploring programs and funding sources.

Community Colleges:

2.5 Faculty and Staff—The faculty and staff at Iowa community colleges will be talented, diverse, well-qualified and well-trained to meet the needs of students and respond to the quickly changing work force.

The demands placed on the faculty and staff at Iowa's community colleges are tremendous. They must respond to the widely varied needs of students of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Their professional skills must keep pace with the rapid changes occurring in the work place. In addition, it is important that community college personnel represent a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The vitality that results from diversity in cultures and experiences among faculty members will be a great benefit to students.

Many well-qualified faculty members will retire from Iowa community colleges in the next 10 years. But enough qualified people with diverse educational and cultural backgrounds are not available within the state.

Strategy: Community colleges, in conjunction with the Department of Education, will aggressively recruit the most talented, well-qualified, diverse faculty in the nation. Community colleges will work through the Board of Educational Examiners to develop appropriate licensure requirements that are flexible enough to respond to changing work force needs. The Department of Education will provide leadership in establishing a variety of staff development programs to enhance the skills of faculty and staff.

2.6 Literacy—Iowa community colleges will improve literacy levels for under-educated adults.

Every year, Iowa community colleges help hundreds of Iowans improve their chances in life through adult literacy programs. But many more adults can be reached and helped to become literate. Community colleges must identify and meet the literacy needs of all Iowans, especially people with disabilities, unemployed adults, members of minority groups, homeless people, immigrants and under-skilled workers.

Strategy: The Department of Education will provide leadership to community colleges in working with all interested groups, including businesses, in developing and delivering literacy programs in order to serve more Iowans.

"The technology of the classroom changes just like technology in industry. It's very important for instructors and administrators to be aware of state-of-the-art techniques not only in the field of education but in their field of expertise, as well."

Nancy Kothenbeutel, executive director, community education, Eastern Iowa Community College District

Vocational Rehabilitation:

2.7 Human Resources—People with disabilities will be recruited for rehabilitation careers.

The need for rehabilitation workers far exceeds the current supply. A large untapped work force exists among those with the best understanding of the special needs and problems faced by people with disabilities: the disabled themselves.

Strategy: The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services will develop strategies to identify and recruit high-quality candidates with disabilities for careers in vocational rehabilitation.

Transforming the Education System

Goal: To transform the education system at the building, district, area and state levels to support the teaching and learning process.

This plan calls for all the players that support education to marshall their resources in support of dramatic change. It calls for fresh approaches to the system that supports learning. It calls for removing the traditional but arbitrary restrictions on how schools work, such as rigid grade levels and length of the school year or school day. It sets the stage for creative approaches designed to help students learn best by giving educators the freedom to explore regional education, magnet schools, shared programs and technology. And it calls for giving educators the time and training they need to explore options that will improve student learning.

Major Objectives

Elementary/Secondary:

3.1 Leadership and Coordination for the Statewide Support System for Elementary/Secondary Education—The education system will be transformed to support change and to provide long-term support for 21st-century Iowa schools.

The current distribution of resources in Iowa education was intended to support and modestly improve an existing system, not to support long-term, dynamic change. Substantial change will require that existing resources be marshalled in a way that avoids the fragmentation, duplication and unequal access that are part of today's support structure. All of the players in the support system—the Department of Education, area education agencies, community colleges, educator preparation programs, the FINE Foundation, the State Board of Education, the Board of Educational Examiners, major educational organizations and others—have shown strong independent interest in supporting change, but they do not act as part of a coherent system. If the coherent system does not emerge quickly, those best positioned to support change will become its largest obstacle. This need not be an issue of coercion or control, but it is an issue of leadership toward a common purpose.

Strategy: The director of the Department of Education will convene the leaders of the support system to discuss mutual responsibilities in bringing coherence to new direction and priorities. Each partner will then develop plans or strategies to align their own resources to best fulfill the roles and responsibilities they have accepted.

"Area education agencies can have a strong impact on achieving the goals in this plan because of our ability to work with numerous stakeholders, providing support and expertise through educational services, media and special education."

Wayne Rand, administrator, Heartland Area Education Agency

3.2 Removing Barriers—Iowa's education system will remove barriers that prevent students from learning at their own pace, so that those who are ready to move on can, and those who need extra help receive it.

Today, restrictive rules and traditions often keep schools from doing what is logical to help students learn. For example, elementary and secondary schools are designed around rigid grade levels where students are placed by age. But youngsters naturally develop different abilities at different rates, and one 9-year-old may be ready to learn a concept while another is not. The current structure often results in "teaching to the middle," so that some students feel like they are falling behind and others feel they are being held back. Students move from grade to grade based on time spent in class, not on what they have learned. A better way is to let students succeed at their own rate through experiences that fit them. This would let teachers blend students in creative ways, help students who might be struggling and challenge students of greater ability.

Inherent in this idea is that communities should have greater flexibility in operating their schools. Schools should be encouraged to innovate and explore nontraditional ways to help all students reach higher levels of achievement. They might decide to lengthen the school day or school year, give students credit for learning on a job, blend federally funded programs such as special education and Chapter 1, or other options.

Strategy: The Department of Education will encourage non-graded preschool/primary settings in elementary schools, perhaps on a pilot basis. State and federal laws and rules will be reviewed to encourage the reduction of barriers among elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, community colleges and four-year colleges in order to open more opportunities for students.

3.3 Planning and Staff Development—Professional educators will have the time and support services they need to do their jobs.

Today, educators have few opportunities to plan or work together. Their staff development is often a one-shot offering rather than a focused, on-going program. The time for both planning and staff development is often limited to meeting after work or leaving the classroom during the school day. Teachers need time for these activities without having to sacrifice the precious time they spend with students.

Strategy: The Department of Education will continue to encourage school districts and area education agencies to use Phase III resources to focus on school transformation based on building- and district-wide goals; investigate alternatives, including funding mechanisms, that lengthen teaching contracts or otherwise allow greater flexibility in use of existing time; and explore new ways to allow educators to develop the skills needed today in areas such as shared decision making, learning cooperatives and portfolio assessment.

3.4 Regional Pooling of Resources—School districts will pool resources to increase educational opportunities for students.

Dramatic demographic and economic changes in the state have made it more difficult for many smaller communities to offer comprehensive services of all kinds to their patrons. Education is no exception. Many of these communities are rethinking the traditional boundaries of "community" and pooling resources to meet the challenge. A regional approach to education need not be limited to sharing a traditional high school program. A consortium of school districts and community colleges can clearly support technical-vocational programs, but they must also consider other specialized programs such as apprenticeships, advanced placement, intervention programs for at-risk students, prekindergarten and others. There is also increasing evidence that there are benefits from consortiums that provide management functions such as finance, purchasing, transportation or personnel. Creative collaboration among school districts, community colleges, area education agencies, four-year colleges and other regional agencies is essential to providing the type of education envisioned in this plan.

Strategy: The Department of Education will encourage school districts to consider a wider range of collaboration in educational programming, particularly at the secondary level. The Department will identify barriers and funding incentives, encourage pilot initiatives and disseminate successful programs.

The Department will advocate that funding incentives for shared curriculum services be continued since that has become an effective example of pooled resources.

"The plan shows a drive for more collaboration on the part of all players, not just education but all agencies that serve children and families. Collaborative efforts allow professionals to work together to solve problems facing children and families."

Wayne Rand, administrator, Heartland Area Education Agency

3.5 Student Health and Social Services—Schools will work with families and community agencies to ensure that students' health care, nutrition and emotional needs are met.

Students can't be expected to learn when they are hungry, sick or deeply unhappy. While schools can't ignore these problems and their effect on learning, they also can't solve the problems alone. Schools must open the door by communicating and working together with other community, county and state social and health agencies in helping students and families in need.

Strategy: The Department of Education will work with state employment, health and human service agencies to identify and remove policies that make it difficult for schools and community agencies to work together to meet the needs of children and families. State policy will be developed to ensure that all children and families have access to the services they need.

3.6 Facilities—Attention will be given to the many Iowa school buildings that have deteriorated with age or need redesign for future educational needs.

Short-term delays in improving and maintaining facilities have become long-term liabilities in many school districts. What traditionally has been considered a local problem now looms as an issue that threatens the state's effectiveness in providing a strong educational system.

Strategy: The Department of Education will advocate legislation to lower the approval level needed for bond issues from 60 percent to a simple majority. The funding source for bond issues will also be reviewed to consider revenue sources more similar to those now used for other educational programs. Standards which consider issues of climate control and instructional technology will be included in the legislation.

"Through simulations with multimedia technology, teachers can put students in situations where the students make decisions and see the results immediately, which makes learning far more meaningful. It goes a long way beyond reading a chapter in a textbook and answering the questions at the end."

Ann Thompson, chair, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, Iowa State University

Elementary /Secondary and Community Colleges:

3.7 Instructional Technology—The power of technology will be harnessed in Iowa schools and community colleges to help students learn.

Learning technology can range from an ordinary telephone which connects parents with teachers to a complex network of satellites, cable and fiber optics which delivers interactive, multi-media learning opportunities. Technology can provide students and teachers equitable access to learning no matter what their geographic location or the fixed resources of the school.

Technology such as distance learning, multi-media, artificial intelligence and computerized instructional management systems all have the potential to improve instruction. One of the most promising for use in Iowa is distance learning technology, which links students at remote sites with a teacher or speaker at another site. It opens up learning opportunities to people who could not normally afford transportation or child care. In addition, the technology can be used to assist with local problems and provide training to business, industry and labor. It can be used to train small groups when training large groups would not be economically or logistically possible. It can enhance collaborative efforts between the elementary/ secondary school system and other educational entities.

Promising efforts are occurring in several Iowa schools and community colleges today to tap the potential of learning technology. But beyond those few efforts, implementation in Iowa has been very slow. While financial resources have been a limitation, the greatest barrier seems to be a lack of a coherent policy to bring the technology together with the user.

Strategy: The State Board of Education will appoint a technology commission representing the state, regional and local levels to develop plans clearly stating how technology can be used to meet teaching/learning needs. Plans will also be made for the development of available resources.

As one component of providing access to instructional technology, Iowa will fund and implement an affordable telecommunications system to provide distance learning opportunities for students. Educators will be involved in developing the system so that it meets the classroom needs.

Community Colleges:

3.8 Articulation and Transfer—Iowa students will be able to move easily and smoothly from one educational program to the next.

Currently, students who complete a transfer course or program at a community college have no guarantee that their credits will transfer to a four-year college or university. Students should not have to duplicate their efforts in the education process. They need to be able to plan their educational program from high

school through college by knowing clearly what is available to them and expected of them at each level. Articulation of courses and programs benefits all students.

Strategy: The Department of Education will work with the articulation committee of the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education, the Regents Committee on Educational Relations, and community colleges to improve articulation of degrees, programs and courses among community colleges, regents' universities, and independent colleges.

3.9 Economic Development—Community colleges will increase programs and services delivered for economic development.

In response to dramatic demographic and economic changes, Iowa must continue to foster economic development at the state and regional levels. Community colleges have a proven track record of improving their regional economies by working with business, industry and labor to develop customized training programs and enhance worker productivity. Through increased collaboration with state agencies and other educational entities, community colleges can help business and industry enhance their competitiveness and expand Iowa's work force.

Strategy: Community colleges will work with other partners to enhance economic development. Community colleges will continue to provide leadership in economic development by increasing their dissemination of information, facilitating improved applications of technology in the work place, and providing high-quality training and retraining in response to community and regional needs.

"It's imperative for students in their educational planning to know exactly what courses they need to take and how well they'll transfer to other institutions."

Nancy Kothenbeutel, executive director, community education, Eastern Iowa Community College District

Building Leadership and Accountability

Goal: To provide leadership to improve Iowa education through systematic planning and quality assurance.

Strong support for school transformation must continue. This plan describes the state's commitment to supporting students, families, educators and communities in their efforts to transform Iowa schools for the 21st century. It profiles the importance of evaluating progress toward goals. It calls for the development of better tools to manage information so that leaders at all levels can make better decisions. It defines the State Board of Education's on-going commitment to leadership and planning. Simply creating a shared vision is not enough, however. The State Board and Department of Education must champion resources for implementation and provide measures of accountability to see that the vision is accomplished.

"If change is going to happen, it will be at the building level, not mandated from above. This plan puts accountability and flexibility at the local level where it needs to be. It gives greater flexibility to educators at the building and district levels to transform the system to meet the needs of Iowa students in the 21st century."

John Mesicek, language arts teacher, Ankeny High School, and vice president, Iowa State Education Association

Major Objectives

Elementary/Secondary:

4.1 Shared Accountability—Iowans will know how well schools in their community and in the state as a whole are succeeding in helping students reach the outcomes to be identified at the state and local levels.

Every Iowan has a stake in the success of the state's schools. Everyone must care enough about progress to celebrate gains and be concerned about losses. The education system must design a better method for being accountable for results. As the state and local outcomes described in objective 1.1 are developed, then indicators of student progress in meeting these outcomes should be developed at the local and state levels. Reports of progress should be made at least annually at both levels.

Strategy: The Department of Education will coordinate a process for developing indicators along with the development of state student outcomes and recommend that the Iowa Legislature adapt current school accreditation standards so that schools are being held accountable for results.

Elementary/Secondary and Community Colleges:

4.2 Information System—Iowa communities will have access to the best, most current information available about the programs, statistics, research and practices of Iowa schools and colleges.

The "information age" is a reality, yet lack of information seriously inhibits the ability of the education system to change. Expectations for what schools are to accomplish are rising and the complexity of education is increasing. This requires that educators and policy makers have a state-of-the-art, responsive and credible information system to provide easy and timely access to information about programs, personnel, demographics, finances and facilities.

Strategy: The Department of Education will develop recommendations about how to create an information management system to serve elementary and secondary education and community colleges. Existing projects such as university research facilities, the FINE Foundation and others can be used as building blocks for the more complete system.

4.3 Strategic Planning—Iowa will use strategic planning to ensure continuous progress toward world-class schools.

Creating the world's best education system for Iowa students won't happen at random. It will take continued, comprehensive planning that transcends various interests, agencies and levels to provide a dynamic vision for education.

Strategy: The Department of Education will continue to support a strategic planning process that involves a broad cross-section of education stakeholders. The process will include information gathering, goal setting, and monitoring and reporting progress, all with the extensive involvement of Iowans. The Department of Education will publish an annual report of progress on each sector of the education system under its jurisdiction.

"Strategic planning is a powerful tool that allows us to set goals for what we want our education system to be in the future, and then make specific plans to reach those goals. This plan is a good effort to ensure that Iowa education is equipped to meet the challenges of tomorrow."

Representative Art Ollie, chair, House Education Committee

4.4 Embracing Diversity—Educational programs and policies will promote appreciation for racial and cultural diversity and ensure equal opportunity.

Iowa is recognized as a national leader in developing programs that help students understand and appreciate racial and cultural diversity. These programs have not been implemented with the same urgency in every school and college, however. Recent events in Iowa and nationally indicate a lack of acceptance of diversity in the population. This heightens the need to affirm a statewide commitment in Iowa to the role of the educational system in creating a positive culture for equity.

Strategy: The Department of Education will ensure multicultural, nonsexist approaches to educational programs. The Department will continue to develop strategies to assist districts and colleges that exhibit special needs. In establishing state student outcomes, attention will be given to ensure that they reflect an appreciation of cultural and racial diversity.

Community Colleges:

4.5 Resources—Resources available to community colleges will match community needs.

The community colleges are charged with responding to diverse local needs and constituencies. Demands for community college programs and services have risen dramatically. As community colleges have responded, enrollments have increased. Revenues from a variety of sources need to be examined to meet the demands.

Strategy: The Department of Education will form a task force to evaluate the adequacy of resources against the emerging needs of the community college system and make recommendations to the State Board of Education.

4.6 Access to Community Colleges—Each community college will demonstrate its effectiveness in providing accessible programs, services and activities to all constituents, while demonstrating student success.

Community colleges must meet the diverse educational needs of secondary and postsecondary students of all ages, students with differing academic abilities, minority students, students with disabilities or disadvantages, and students with family and employment commitments. For this reason, they are often referred to as "open door" institutions. The challenge is to keep the "open door" from becoming

a "revolving door." To be truly effective, community colleges must demonstrate that they are providing not only access to programs, but that students are succeeding in those programs.

Strategy: Community colleges will assess the availability of programs and services based upon constituent needs and student goals and develop strategies to improve access and success.

"We must define 'students' as all segments of our population, from the time they're born through adulthood. At no time in our lives are we not learners. For most adults, community colleges are the educational institution closest to home and their best access to training and retraining opportunities."

Susan Fisher, president, Mason City Board of Education

4.7 Accountability—Community colleges will assess and document institutional and programmatic effectiveness.

Taxpayers, legislators, and other public officials are demanding that institutions account for their use of public funds; at the same time, local constituencies are requesting increasingly high-quality educational programs. Within the larger context of the current national trend toward documenting learning outcomes and increasing accountability, community colleges need to prove that they are continually improving their ability to provide effective, efficient, high quality programs and services. Collection, analysis and communication of evidence of quality will document the excellence provided by Iowa's community colleges.

Strategy: The Department of Education will develop and implement standards and a process for accrediting community college programs and functions at the state level. This initiative will include an outcomes-based model for evaluating and demonstrating quality in instructional programs.

4.8 Quality Improvement—A process of continuous quality improvement will be developed to enhance teaching and learning in community colleges.

Perhaps more than any other sector of education, the community colleges must be responsive to quickly changing needs among the people they serve. One way to ensure that programs are of the highest quality is described in a growing body of research as "continuous quality improvement." This is a series of steps taken to improve quality in specific institutional activities. The steps include information gathering, evaluation and improvement with the goal of excellence. Many national studies point to the need for improved performance and increased accountability in community colleges. Continuous quality improvement will indicate that schools and colleges care about quality; they are accountable; programs and services are effective; performance is improving; and that they deserve support.

Strategy: The Department of Education will work with the community colleges to define the basic components of a quality improvement process. The community colleges will then coordinate local planning and professional development to customize the process for use in each college. The Department will be responsible for gathering and sharing information on the results.

4.9 Vocational-Technical Education—The State Board of Education will establish a vision for the future of vocational-technical education in Iowa.

Several recent studies of the American work force project that the nature of the work place, the composition of the work force and the skills needed by workers

are changing rapidly. To prepare for the future, Iowa must examine the responsibilities of secondary and postsecondary education in most effectively meeting the training and retraining needs of the work force.

Strategy: A "visioning task force" on vocational-technical education is developing recommendations to be submitted to the State Board of Education by February 1992. This 10-member task-force is composed of representatives of secondary schools, community colleges, the state council on vocational education and educators.

4.10 State Technical-Preparation Model—Iowa will ensure that young people who do not wish to continue their education in four-year colleges or universities are prepared for the job market.

Many education analysts say that the United States does the poorest job of any industrialized country in preparing its young people for the world of work. Students who do not decide to attend a four-year college have been called "the forgotten half" because so little attention is paid to their needs in the education system. There is a critical need to upgrade the technical preparation received by these young people before they enter the job market.

Developing a statewide technical-preparation, or "tech-prep," model is a first step in solving the problem. Tech-prep programs involve close cooperation among secondary education, postsecondary education, business and labor. They link education to employment standards, which increases basic academic and technical skills of students and expands their career options. They are designed to meet the great range of individual differences among students and to provide the skills students need in order to continue to learn later as job-market requirements change.

Strategy: The Department of Education will establish a statewide committee to develop basic requirements and implementation guidelines for tech-prep programs that can be adapted by school districts and community colleges.

4.11 Equitable Access—People of color will have better access to community college programs and services.

The report of the National Task Force on Minority Achievement in Higher Education of the Education Commission of the States highlighted that the current system of higher education appeals to and meets the needs of fewer and fewer students. Although it is projected that one-third of the nation will be African-American or Hispanic by early in the next century, these groups have the least success in the current system. In addition, the report cited the following: within 10 years, one-third of workers entering the work force will be members of minority groups; in less than 10 years, a majority of all new jobs will require some postsecondary education; and in 1987, students of color received only 12 percent of bachelor's degrees awarded.

A 1989 Department of Education study of Iowa minority student involvement in secondary and postsecondary education found higher levels of participation in community colleges than elsewhere in higher education. However, retention of minority students can be improved.

In order to improve results, the national task force emphasized that state and federal agencies and colleges and universities should provide leadership to remove

barriers to minority student success, help students achieve and change learning environments.

Strategy: The Department of Education will conduct statewide workshops to inform faculty and staff on removing barriers, helping students achieve and changing learning environments. The Department will also develop recommendations for action by the state and community colleges.

Vocational Rehabilitation:

4.12 Increased Service—Iowans, especially employers, will be assisted in meeting the goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Americans with Disabilities Act becomes reality for many employers on July 1, 1992. To meet the goals of the law, employers and others will require assistance in many areas including job descriptions, job accommodations and work place modifications.

Strategy: The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Department of Education, Commission on Persons with Disabilities and several advocacy groups will develop a coordinated state plan to meet the demand for staff services and resources.

Appendix

A Review of the Planning Process

In January of 1991, the State Board of Education approved a strategic planning process to put in place a long-range plan for education in Iowa. It was not the State Board's intent to have a single plan that would endure for five or six years. It clearly approved a process that would provide a long-range plan that could be updated and revised each year in response to changing needs.

The process approved by the State Board consisted of four steps that will remain a part of the process each year, even though they may be implemented somewhat differently in future years. Those steps are:

1. Information Gathering
2. Collaborative Decision Making
3. Approval and Implementation
4. Evaluation and Reporting

Information Gathering

The development of this plan included extensive information gathering and the review of recommendations from several recent state reports including the Condition of Education Report, the report of the Commission on Enhancing Educational Leadership in Iowa, the report of the Iowa Business and Education Roundtable as well as information provided by other organizations and constituents. The critical issues that are the "target" of the long-range plan grew out of the analysis of this information. These critical issues were discussed and further shaped by participants at 15 regional meetings held in April and May of 1991.

Collaborative Decision Making

The Strategic Planning Council was appointed by William Lepley, director of the Department of Education, and began meeting in May 1991 to develop recommendations to deal with these issues. The 45-member Council was composed largely of practitioners representing a variety of roles in education in Iowa.

The Planning Council held 15 regional meetings to gain reactions regarding the original recommendations. They reviewed more than 1,500 written group comments and data from 772 structured individual responses. They also reviewed written comments received from 19 people who took the option of writing directly to the Planning Council.

In several cases the Strategic Planning Council made changes to avoid misunderstanding and still preserve the original intent of the recommendations. Other recommendations were revised to be more inclusive based on the suggestions received by the Planning Council or based on other new information.

Approval and Implementation

The Planning Council submitted its final recommendations to the director of the Department of Education in October 1991. The director accepted the recommendations, amended some and added others before submission to the State Board in November. Additional changes were made after the State Board's initial discussion

of the plan at its November meeting. The plan was adopted by the Board in December 1991.

With State Board approval of the plan, implementation will begin and some ongoing activities will continue. As the recommendations indicate, various groups are suggested as being responsible for implementation.

Evaluation and Reporting

A continuous part of the planning process will be evaluating the degree to which the needs identified in each recommendation have been addressed. This goes beyond determining that the recommended activities have been carried out. It means determining if they have "made any difference" in terms of the original need. The results of this evaluation will be reported as part of the planning process and through an annual report to all constituents.